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on Friday, 8 July 1994, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. BOTEZ (Romania)
(Vice-President)

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In the absence of the President, Mr Botez (Romania), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

COORDINATION OF THE POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER BODIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM (continued) (A/49/204-E/1994/90, A/49/205-E/1994/91):

(a) SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT (E/1994/70) (continued)

Mr. DZUNDEV (Observer for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that coordination at the country level - the most difficult area of coordination - was essential for countries in transition to a market economy. That was why the role of the United Nations Resident Coordinator should be strengthened in order to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of United Nations activities at the field level. His Government was willing to host a country office of the United Nations Development Programme which would be responsible, among other things, for science and technology. Unfortunately, his country's efforts to develop science and technology had been hampered by external factors. Although the United Nations system should continue to develop activities geared towards the advancement of science and technology, his delegation emphasized the need to transfer science and technology to countries in transition and developing countries. It was also important to pay more attention to the provision of scientific and technological cooperation through the regional commissions.

Mr. CHAMBERS (International Labour Organisation (ILO)) said that the increasing globalization of production sparked by high technology called for concerted, coordinated action within the United Nations system. Contrary to popular belief, new technologies such as biotechnology and information

technology had created job opportunities throughout the world. However, since the new technologies had enormous implications for changing occupational structures and skill requirements in both developed and developing countries, continuous monitoring of that trend was of vital importance. ILO intended to pay increasing attention to that aspect in the future. Other areas of concern to ILO in the field of science and technology included the impact of technological change on working conditions and the environment, training needs for the utilization of new technologies, the gender implications of science and technology, technologies for small-scale economic activities for low-income populations, and environmentally sound technologies.

Mr. BASMADJIEV (Bulgaria) said that it was essential to combine the potential of different countries in the area of science and technology in order to promote development. Capacity-building in science and technology was crucial for countries undergoing economic difficulties, particularly those with economies in transition. Access on concessional terms to advanced technologies would help such countries to overcome some of their economic readjustment problems. His delegation believed that under its new format, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) would achieve tangible results in the promotion of international cooperation for scientific and technological progress. However, the new role of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in science and technology should not undermine the Commission's role in that regard.

The issues of science and technology to be discussed by the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) at its 1995 session would make it possible to establish the link between access to environmentally sound technologies and sustainable development. Therefore, CSTD and CSD should coordinate their work closely in order to avoid overlapping. He expressed interest in the activities of the United Nations system to promote and develop regional, subregional and national information capabilities to facilitate access to modern production technologies and supported the proposal to create a coordination mechanism for financing activities in that field in countries in

transition and other countries experiencing economic difficulties. He also stressed the need to improve the exchange of information and the pooling of resources within the United Nations system.

Mr. FLORENCIO (Brazil) said that while the private sector had an unquestionable role to play in the development of new technologies, the State had traditionally played a catalytic, promotional role in that regard. It was equally undeniable that the United Nations had a similar role to play in the transfer of scientific and technological capacities to developing countries. He was therefore disappointed that the report of the Secretary-General (E/1994/70) offered very little by way of concrete recommendations for enhancing the capabilities of the United Nations system through improved coordination. The report could have indicated how the bodies of the United Nations system might contribute in a coordinated manner to the elaboration and subsequent implementation of an Agenda for Development in the field of science and technology. Any effort to improve coordination among United Nations bodies in the field of science and technology would have to address the increasing marginalization of that field within the United Nations, a marginalization reflected in the limited financial resources allocated to it when compared with other areas listed in the report. The United Nations system should also provide adequate support to science and technology initiatives within the framework of technical cooperation among developing countries.

Mr. PONIKIEWSKI (Poland) said that several member countries seemed to have identified the transfer of environmentally sound technologies as a priority. One of the major weaknesses of the United Nations activities in the field of science and technology seemed to be access to information by Member States. In that connection, programmes such as the International Environment Information System (INFOTERRA) should be publicized widely in order for countries to take full advantage of them.

Referring to paragraph 34 of the report of the Secretary-General (E/1994/70), he said that the time had perhaps come to reconsider the

usefulness of United Nations intergovernmental forums in general. While he agreed that there was a further need to consolidate and harmonize such intergovernmental machinery, he cautioned against the proliferation of bodies dealing with different aspects of science and technology for development. He also agreed that the regional commissions should be more involved in activities undertaken at the country level in their respective regions. He would like more information on the specific catalytic role played by the United Nations system in the field of science and technology. Referring to the difficulties of inter-agency coordination in that field, he suggested that they might be caused by a lack of appropriate information concerning the corresponding United Nations activities and initiatives. In that connection, he endorsed the proposal by some agencies to establish a single focal point to act as a clearing house for science and technology within the United Nations system. While inter-agency cooperation in the area of advanced technologies such as biotechnology and information sciences should be strengthened at the country level, he wondered whether the United Nations had the means and the expertise to involve itself more fully in those areas. He would like further information on the proposal by the Secretary-General for an integrated inter-agency information network.

Ms. WILLIAMS-MANIGAULT (United States of America) said that her delegation generally supported the report of the Secretary-General on science and technology (E/1994/70), particularly the suggestions in section V. Noting the generic nature of science and technology activities, she said that while comprehensive centralized management of all such activities within the United Nations system was not desirable, the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) would be the most suitable body for coordinating them. The United States supported a stronger, more organic relationship between CSD and the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD). She looked forward to enhanced coordination between the two bodies and to a greater role for CSD as the focal point for coordination of United Nations science and technology activities, building on the promotion of environmentally sound

technologies as a central aim of the Organization's efforts in that field. At the inter-agency level, she supported the efforts of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development as task manager for the transfer of environmentally sound technologies. Her delegation felt that UNDP should play the lead role in operational coordination of United Nations science and technology activities at the country level in support of national capacity-building for development.

Mr. RUDENSKY (Russian Federation) said that the report of the Secretary-General (E/1994/70) provided an excellent basis for consideration of the subject under discussion, given the leading role which science and technology would play in the twenty-first century. The goal of sustainable development must provide the foundation for inter-agency coordination within a framework of scientific and technological progress.

The Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) should be concerned not only with intersectoral problems of international cooperation but should also formulate global conceptual approaches to the problems of science and technology within the framework of a single, coordinated system.

The Commission on Sustainable Development was considering relevant conceptual issues such as the transfer of technology for sustainable development. It should be called upon to provide periodic analyses of the overall situation regarding science and technology and of priorities for national policies, with a view to establishing a sound basis for coordination within the United Nations system and for the coordination of policies for sustainable development.

It was important clearly to define the functions of the Commission of Science and Technology for Development, bearing in mind the discussion of technology transfer in the Commission's inter-sessional meetings on financial resources and sectoral questions and the decisions of the Commission on Sustainable Development to deal with the transfer of technology as well. The latter body's panel should concentrate primarily on determining the ecological

safety of possibly destructive technologies and on preparing the corresponding recommendations.

It was also important clearly to define the functions of the UNCTAD Ad Hoc Working Group on the Relationship between Investment and Technology Transfer. Lastly, he stressed the importance of the coordination efforts of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development during the inter-sessional period.

The PRESIDENT said that he wished to summarize the main points that had emerged from the statements made thus far on the item. To begin with, it was recognized that the overall policy framework for the coordination of the policies and activities of the United Nations system related to science and technology for development was provided by the Vienna Programme of Action on Science and Technology for Development and by Agenda 21. It was also felt that a number of questions must be tackled. For instance, what should the United Nations do to address the fact that limited resources were available for science and technology? How should the subject of science and technology be approached at the national, regional and global levels, and how could a balance be struck between general and sectoral approaches? What were the roles of the Inter-agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD) and the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) with regard to coordination within the United Nations system at the global, regional and country levels? How could the regional commissions best cooperate with the specialized agencies, financial institutions and other regional and subregional bodies? At the national level, how could the role of the resident coordinator be strengthened and such instruments as the programme approach and national execution be used to enhance coordination?

Moreover, how could the harmonization of the work programmes and schedules of such intergovernmental bodies as the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, the Commission on Transnational Corporations and the Commission on Sustainable Development be improved? Lastly, how could the United Nations system cooperate with other major actors, including the private

sector, non-governmental organizations, scientific and research organizations, educational and training institutions and local and community-based organizations, to serve as a catalyst for promoting science and technology in the developing countries and the world as a whole?

Mr. CLAVIJO (Colombia) said that the points raised by the President should be addressed in a Council decision, which should focus on how to ensure the coordination of already agreed programmes and on the elements in the report of the Secretary-General (E/1994/70) which had been agreed by consensus.

The Council's decision should define more clearly the differences between the functions of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development (DPCSD) and UNCTAD. In the light of the problems which had arisen regarding the allocation of resources, it might be desirable to include a paragraph on resources for UNCTAD in the Council's decision. In view of the shortage of resources, the Council might also wish to include a paragraph calling for follow-up to the forthcoming meeting on the pooling of resources in science and technology, which his delegation hoped would result in a clearer policy on resource allocation within and outside the United Nations system. A final point which the Council's decision should address was the role of the resident coordinator.

Mr. FLANDERS (Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development) said that his Department and UNCTAD operated very closely and that there was a clear division between their respective responsibilities. His Department had primary substantive responsibility for the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), while UNCTAD provided virtually all substantive support for the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD). His Department and UNCTAD had agreed that matters relating to coordination between CSD and CSTD were the responsibility of his Department.

In practice, that meant that the CSTD panel which was to provide input to CSD would be supported by his Department, while all other substantive support for CSTD would be provided by UNCTAD.

Mr. FLORENCIO (Brazil) emphasized that the role of science and technology in the United Nations had been minimal and marginal, a fact borne out by the figures in the report of the Secretary-General. That could be explained by the fact that science and technology required a long-term perspective and thus did not have such dramatic public appeal for the United Nations. Furthermore, since science and technology were the key factors in determining competitiveness, some countries were reluctant to encourage the transfer of something entailing so much economic power.

The emphasis must be on how to ensure a major role for science and technology within the United Nations. To achieve that goal, it was necessary to restore the importance of economic development within the United Nations, a goal which the Secretary-General was pursuing in the Agenda for Development.

He had observed two approaches to science and technology in the United Nations debate. The United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization favoured a multi-disciplinary approach, while the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations and the Secretary-General, in his report to the Council, favoured a sectoral approach.

Mr. BIONTINO (Germany), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that science and technology were always a major structural aspect of development activities, even when their impact was not immediately apparent. There appeared to be a fair amount of consensus regarding the role of the core actors responsible for coordination in the field of science and technology, although some aspects of the question could be pursued in further discussions. It was important to rely on the existing structure within the United Nations for such coordination, and he stressed the value of the task manager arrangements instituted by the Inter-agency Committee on Sustainable Development in that connection.

Mr. VENKATARAMAN (United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)) said that while he agreed that the Vienna Programme of Action on Science and Technology for Development and Agenda 21 illustrated the

intentions of the international community in the field of science and technology, they were more of a compendium of actions to be taken at the national level than a blueprint for direct action by the United Nations system. Moreover, some of the relevant resolutions were very broad in scope and omitted the sectoral component, which must be taken into account in any discussion of a policy framework for science and technology. Accordingly, it would be helpful if the agencies of the United Nations system, over a period of time, selected specific themes on which to focus their cooperation in that field.

As to the resources devoted to science and technology in the United Nations system, it should be borne in mind that many operational activities had science and technology components which were not separately accounted for as such. In the long run, the level of resources for science and technology could be increased by channelling resources into such activities. With regard to the approach to science and technology at the national level, while national execution was an important instrument, it must be recognized that the sectoral expertise required to strengthen the national capacity often was not available in developing countries.

Mr. BADRON (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that it was important not to be misled by the figure on agency expenditures on science and technology mentioned in item 21 of the Secretary-General's report contained in document E/1994/70. Although the figure appeared very small, it did not include elements such as training and education in science and technology. He stressed that international coordination could be ensured either at the Headquarters level in New York and in the various agencies, or at the national level. He felt that coordination at the Headquarters level had been adequately addressed in Agenda 21, and was working well in UNESCO. It was common for the task manager of an agency to meet and coordinate with colleagues from other parts of the system. However, there was also an invisible component of coordination in dealing with biotechnology, AIDS and other areas of the United Nations system:

action-oriented meetings at the grass-roots level, which were not announced or dictated from the top.

He felt that the United Nations coordinator at the national level should have a key steering role in science and technology. For example, coordination between UNDP and the specialized agencies had been excellent at the higher level, but not so strong at the national level.

Mr. RUDENSKY (Russian Federation) agreed with the representative of UNESCO that coordination must be appropriate to the level at which it took place. That point needed further clarification, since coordination at the national level could take place either through the Government or through the private sector. The United Nations characteristically dealt with areas of science and technology that were related to supranational activities of primary interest to Governments, but another kind of coordination was needed for the private sector. A number of speakers had said that the problem of sustainable development was supranational and had situated such development in the field of science and technology, in case the two problems went hand in hand. While practical steps must be taken in coordination with governmental bodies, at the national level it was important to be flexible. As a universal body, the United Nations could hardly make recommendations to the private sector. Each of the three levels of coordination mentioned by the representative of UNESCO should be specific and distinct from each other in their procedures, goals and actors.

Mr. SZCZERBAN (World Health Organization (WHO)) said that he wished to clarify some of his earlier observations. The actors involved in the coordination process in science and technology were all organizations that had science and technology in their mandates. The mandate of WHO might appear to be too specific for it to be included among those actors, but it had been among the first to recognize the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to science and technology. All major discoveries in science and technology took place on the borderline between disciplines, and that would continue to be true in the future.

He agreed with the representative of Brazil that it was important to decide on the areas in which coordination should take place. It might be necessary to stimulate certain areas of development. WHO felt that the field of science and technology was developing spontaneously and might be impossible to control or direct. However, it was important to be aware of ongoing trends in order to predict what might happen in one or two decades.

It was also necessary to redirect some trends. For example, the biggest advances in medicine were taking place in the area of technology, but many of those advances were too expensive for even developed countries to afford. It was no longer possible to have one science for the rich and another for the poor. It was not always clear whether technology was being stimulated by industry or by human needs. Since political and scientific interests often differed, it was important to open a dialogue between the groups involved, in the interest of future coordination.

Mr. ROFFE (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)) said that the remarks by the delegation of Brazil had been extremely timely. Restoring the activities of the United Nations system in the field of science and technology was the responsibility not only of the Secretariat, but also of Governments. UNCTAD was engaged in cross-sectoral activities and in efforts to raise awareness of problems, emerging issues and the implications of technology. Recently, it had been attempting to involve not only governmental, but also non-governmental, actors in that process. In the light of its recent work on investment and technology, UNCTAD felt that it would be useful to institute a world dialogue aimed at enhancing understanding among economic actors and formulating new strategies for development in science and technology.

Governments should attempt to make their science and technology agendas more relevant. For example, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, which was to meet in 1995, had adopted a vast agenda, embracing many issues, because of the need for compromise among the various actors.

Such an agenda would make organization and constructive work difficult, however.

Mr. THABIT (Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)) spoke of the need to harmonize the work of United Nations bodies with that of Member States when drafting programmes. The regional commissions were well placed to convey the particular needs of their regions to United Nations Headquarters.

Ms. IRISH (Canada) said that there had been much discussion of the need for United Nations agencies and bodies to focus on their own areas of comparative advantage, but that it was important to determine the Organization's own overall advantage in the transfer of technology, which mostly took place within the private sector or between the private sector and Governments. Both national Governments and the United Nations had a role to play in facilitating the transfer of technology, particularly in the fields of capacity-building and information systems, focusing on the national level through the role of the resident coordinator. However, it was important that the United Nations should not try to do too much. The Brazilian delegation had asked to what extent technology should be viewed from a sectoral or a cross-sectoral standpoint. Her delegation felt that technology must be viewed in terms of sectors. Interdisciplinary approaches to individual sectors were possible, but could confuse the issue. Her delegation supported the suggestion that United Nations bodies should work together; the Commission on Sustainable Development was one body whose agenda was determined sufficiently far in advance to make that possible.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.